

News and Information

from the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs

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STATE SETTLES WITH UNION CITY BUSINESSMAN FOR ALLEGED UNDELIVERED ADVERTISING

The Tennessee Attorney General's Office and Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs have reached a settlement agreement with a Union City man accused of selling advertising on park benches, shopping cart corrals and small signs, but then allegedly failing to deliver the ads.

John Bunch, who has done business as Signs Today and under other business names in small towns in at least four states has agreed to pay the State about \$1,000 in civil penalties and for the costs of the investigation. He has also agreed to refrain from similar alleged illegal activities in the future.

"We hope this will finally conclude this unfortunate matter involving small businesses,' Tennessee Attorney General John Knox Walkup said. "This is the second action our Office has had to take in this case, and we hope this is the last."

"This has been an ongoing concern for the Division over the past four years. We have received 190 complaints and I am glad we were finally able to settle the matter," continued Mark Williams, Director of the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs.

Bunch, who is out of business, had agreed in a previous settlement in 1994 to stop alleged deceptive activity after numerous complaints from small businesses in Tennessee and beyond. Bunch is accused of selling ads to small businesses for about \$200 each in several small towns. After collecting the advertising money and allegedly offering a "guarantee" that the ads would be posted for a specified period, Bunch then allegedly neglected to get permission to install the advertising on park benches and shopping cart corrals with the proper officials. He is also accused of failing to follow up with customers when the park benches and corrals were removed before the period expired.

The State entered into new litigation after the Union City man failed to pay all the penalties and attorneys' fees associated with the last settlement, and after the State began to get more consumer complaints for similarly alleged illegal activity. Under the new agreement, Bunch has agreed to notify the Division of Consumer Affairs if he again returned to selling advertising; to get written permission from property owners before placing advertising; to issue refunds for services or goods within 10 days of the request if he is unable to fulfill the promised advertising; and to provide a detailed receipt to customers.